

OPINION

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Reforms to family support needed for kids' sake

Sweeping reforms are planned for the Family Support Plan in Ontario. The Attorney General's office is consulting with groups which will be affected by proposed changes this summer.

To be sure, there will be opposition to the proposals. They require increased sharing of information by employers, banks and various levels and departments of government.

Proposals include:

- *Issuing temporary drivers' licences and vehicle permits until support arrears payments are arranged

- *Requiring certain employers to



Viewpoint

Paula Crowell

report new hirings and rehiring to the Family Support Plan

- *Permitting the plan to enter into agreements with provincial and federal governments, Crown corporations and private employers, providing for on-line access to, or computer matching with, data

banks which may contain current job status and address of payors in default.

- *Requiring insurance companies to obtain a clearance certificate from the Family Support Plan before paying out any life insurance proceeds.

Critics will argue the reforms will create a Big Brother climate which will intimidate payors who fail to pay because of circumstances beyond their control. Payors will say it's not fair to garnish wages from temporary employment, when they're just trying to get back on their feet financially. They'll also argue that sup-

port isn't necessary once the custodial parent enters a new financial-supportive relationship.

In some cases, the proposals may not be fair. But neither is it fair to deny children the right to a decent standard of living. Nor is it fair to saddle Ontario taxpayers with \$232 million in social assistance costs for families whose payor defaults.

But complaints about such stringent rules are far outweighed by the rights of children. The pendulum will have to swing perhaps too far to protect children, before it can settle on median ground.

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PATRICIA PAPPAS, PUBLISHER
JO ANN STEVENSON, Editor-in-chief
PAULA CROWELL, Editor
ANDREW MAIR, Editor
DEBRA WELLS, Director of Advertising
BARRY GOODYEAR, Director of Distribution
VIVIAN O'NEIL, Business Manager
PAMELA NICHOLS, Operations Manager

Markham 294-2200 (sales 798-7624, classified 294-4331), Stouffville 640-2100, Uxbridge 852-9741
294-8244 distribution and administration
9 Heritage Rd. Markham L3P 1M2
FAX: Markham 294-1538, Stouffville 640-5477, Uxbridge 852-4355

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Battle of the sexes destined to continue

Ready for another sea change in shopping patterns? This phenomenon is gathering steam in the shopping malls and chic boutiques of sunny California. The Los Angeles Times calls it "Cross Shopping." What's happening is unprecedented numbers of men shopping for women and women are shopping for men — but particularly the former. Los Angeles retailers are reporting whole herds of males poking around the lingerie and notions departments, where only the female of the species used to congregate. What's it mean? No one is quite sure. Some experts think men cop an illicit thrill just infiltrating "behind enemy lines." Other behaviorists tug their beards and warn of a dark side to cross shopping — they say it represents an attempt by men to exert control over their spouses.

I say phooey. I don't think there's anything sinister or illicit about cross shopping at all. I believe it represents but one more revolution of the Gender Blender that's been turning us into biological vichyssoise for years.

And about time too. I come from an age when there were separate entrances at the public schools marked BOYS and GIRLS. I can remember a kid in my Grade 8 class being sent home in tears. Her crime? Wearing slacks to class.

Just to show you how much times have changed, consider the case of Brett Martin, an 18-year-old senior high school student in Knoxville, Iowa. He, too, got in hot water for "inappropriate dress" — but with a distinctly 90s twist.

Brett was nailed for showing up at his Knoxville High School prom dressed in a wig, mascara and a red, sequined, spaghetti-strapped dress he borrowed from his sister.

Brett Martin did it as a lark, but the Knoxville High School principal — a humorless sod who must have been caught sneaking in the GIRLS entrance as a student — didn't laugh. Instead he had Martin charged with criminal trespass.

The principal should get with the times. Hasn't he heard about Teresinha de Jesus Gomes? Teresinha is a bluff, gladhanded 50-year-old woman who's been famous in military circles of Por-



Basic Black

Arthur Black

tugal for the past two decades. But not as Teresinha de Jesus Gomes. Her army buddies knew her as Tito Anibal de Paixao Gomes. Uh, that's General Tito Anibal de Paixao Gomes, to be precise.

For 19 years, "the General" regaled his/her fellow officers with tales of daring military-intelligence-gathering adventures in South America and behind the Iron Curtain.

They were great stories, but that's all they were. Teresinha/Tito had been impersonating an officer since she donned a general's uniform and her dead brother's name away back in 1974. She'd probably still be in the Portuguese army if she hadn't run up colossal debts for her intended State Wedding. Authorities took away her general's uniform and let her off with a three-year suspended sentence. Oh yeah, and the wedding is off, too.

But the good times are just starting for Damian Taylor down in Brisbane, Australia. Damian is a 24-year-old Australian life-guard, who's on the threshold of a whole new career. There was a picture of Damian in my newspaper last night.

Damian's wearing a sash across his torso in the photograph. The sash reads Miss Wintersun 1993. A man has won the Miss Wintersun Beauty Contest in Australia. "Now that I've done this who knows what I can do?" said a teary Damian. "I don't want to cause any waves with Miss Australia, but I'm going for it."

Sure, go for it, Damian. It's just one more skirmish in the never-ending Battle of the Sexes. Nobody's ever figured that one out, but the comedian George Burns came as close as anybody I know.

"There will always be a battle between the sexes," said George, "because men and women want different things."
"Men want women and women want men."

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